
SENATE BILL 5472

State of Washington

60th Legislature

2007 Regular Session

By Senators Kastama, Holmquist, Rasmussen, Regala, Marr, Carrell, Hargrove, Roach, Jacobsen, Kilmer, Sheldon, Swecker, Shin, Franklin, Clements and Keiser

Read first time 01/19/2007. Referred to Committee on Human Services & Corrections.

1 AN ACT Relating to a pilot program for family counseling; creating
2 a new section; and making an appropriation.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The secretary of the department of
5 health shall establish a pilot program to provide merit checks of no
6 more than one hundred dollars to no more than four hundred fifty
7 couples who complete a family preparation course. Matching funds may
8 be used to increase the number of participants in the pilot program.
9 The pilot program must begin no later than January 1, 2008, and
10 continue for no more than five years, in a county with a population
11 between seven hundred twenty thousand and one million. Under the pilot
12 program, a man and a woman who intend to apply for a marriage license
13 may, together or separately, complete a family preparation course of
14 not less than four hours with a family preparation course provider.
15 The county auditor shall provide to couples interested in applying for
16 a marriage license in the county, or to a qualified instructor,
17 certificate of completion forms for the family preparation course and
18 information that includes a brief explanation of the course of required
19 instruction, the required length of time of the course, and an

1 explanation of the qualified instructor requirements. Within ninety
2 days of applying for a marriage license, either applicant may verify
3 completion of a family preparation course by filing with the department
4 of health a copy of the marriage certificate and a valid certificate of
5 completion from a registered course provider. Completed forms must
6 include names and addresses of participants, the name and work address
7 of the course provider, signatures of participants attesting to the
8 completion of the required coursework and the required length of
9 instruction, and the signature of the qualified instructor attesting to
10 being a qualified instructor and providing the required coursework and
11 time requirement for the participants.

12 (2) For the purposes of this section, a family preparation course
13 must include instruction regarding:

- 14 (a) Conflict management;
- 15 (b) Communication skills;
- 16 (c) Financial responsibilities in a marriage; and
- 17 (d) Children and parenting responsibilities.

18 (3) The family preparation course must be at least four hours in
19 length and must be taken from a qualified instructor who is a:

- 20 (a) Licensed psychologist;
- 21 (b) Certified social worker;
- 22 (c) Certified marriage and family therapist;
- 23 (d) Certified mental health counselor;
- 24 (e) Registered counselor with relevant training or coursework;
- 25 (f) Provider designated by a family court judge or commissioner; or
- 26 (g) Official representative of a religious institution, if the
27 representative has relevant training in conflict management,
28 communication skills, financial responsibilities in marriage, and
29 children and parenting responsibilities.

30 (4) Any costs of the family preparation course must be paid by the
31 applicant.

32 (5) When the department of health receives a copy of a marriage
33 certificate and a certificate of completion of a family preparation
34 course issued by a qualified instructor consistent with this section,
35 the department shall, within sixty days, issue a merit check to the
36 couple, not to exceed one hundred dollars per married couple.

37 (6) The department of health's statistics center shall compile

1 information on divorced or annulled couples who had previously
2 participated in a family preparation course.

3 (7) The department of health shall notify county auditors if there
4 are no available funds for this pilot program.

5 (8) The department of health shall report to the appropriate
6 committees of the legislature five years after the completion of the
7 pilot program. The committees shall make recommendations on whether
8 the program should be initiated statewide based on the results of the
9 number of participants who are still married as opposed to the average
10 divorce rate.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The sum of forty-five thousand dollars, or
12 as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium
13 ending June 30, 2009, from the general fund to the department of health
14 for the purposes of this act.

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